

he were ful wys; for soothly, he ne sholde nat thanne in al his lyf have corage to synne, but yeven his body and al his herte to the service of Jhesu Crist, & therof doon hym hommage. for soothly, oure sweete Lord Jhesu Crist hath spared us so debonairly in our folies, that if he ne hadde pitee of mannes soule, a sory song we myghten alle synge.

Explicit prima pars Penitentie; et sequitur secunda pars eiusdem.

THE seconde partie of penitence is confessioun, that is signe of contricioun. Now shul ye understonde what is confessioun, and whether it oghte nedes be doon or noon, and whiche thynges been covenable to verrey confessioun. First shaltow understonde that confessioun is verrey shewing of synnes to the preest; this is to seyn, Verray, for he moste confessen hym of alle the condicions that bilongen to his synne, as ferforth as he kan. Al moot be seyd, and nothyng excused, ne hyd, ne for-wrapped, and nocht avaunte him of his goode werkes. And fortherover, it is neces-sarie to understonde whennes that synnes spryngen, and how they encreessen, and whiche they been. Of the spryngynge of synnes seith Seint Paul in this wise: that Right as by a man synne entred first into this world, and thurgh that synne deeth, right so thilke deeth entred into alle men that synned. And this man was Adam, by whom synne entred into this world whan he brak the comaundement of God. And therefore, he that first was so myghty that he sholde nat have dyed, bicam swich oon that he moste nedes dye, whether he wolde or noon; and al his progenye in this world that in thilke man synned.

LOOKIE, that in thestaat of innocence, whan Adam and Eve naked weren in Paradys, and nothyng ne hadden shame of hir nakednesse, how that the serpent, that was moost wily of alle othere beestes that God hadde makid, seyde to the womman: Why comaunded God to yow, ye sholde nat eten of every tree in Paradys? The womman answerde: Of the fruyt, quod she, of the trees in Paradys we feden us, but soothly, of the fruyt of the tree that is in the myddel of Paradys, God forbad us for to ete, ne nat touchen it, lest peraventure we sholde dyen. The serpent seyde to the womman: Nay, nay, ye shul nat dyen of deeth; for sothe, God woot, that what day that ye eten thereof, youre eyen shul opene, and ye shul been as goddes, knowynge good and harm.

THE womman thanne saugh that the tree was good to feedynge, and fair to the eyen, and delitable to the sight; and yaf to hire housbonde, and he ete it; anon the eyen of hem bothe opened. And whan that they knewe that they were naked, they sowed of fige/leves a maner of breches, to hiden hire membres. Theremay ye seen that deedly synne hath first augment by the naddre; and afterward, the delit of the flesh, as sheweth heere by Eve; and sheweth heere by Adam. for trust wel, though so were that the feend tempted Eve, that is to seyn the flesh, & the flesh hadde delit in the beautee of the fruyt defenced, yet certes, til that resoun, that is to seyn, Adam, consented to the ctyng of the fruyt, yet stood he in thestaat of innocence. Of thilke Adam toole we thilke synne original; for of hym fleschly descended be we alle, and engendred of vile and corrupt matere. And whan the soule is put in oure body, right anon is contract original synne; & that, that was erst but only peyne of concupiscence, is afterward both peyne and synne. And therefore be we alle born sones of wrathe and of dampnacioun perdurable, if it nere baptisme that we receyven, which bynnyeth us the culpe; but forsothe, the peyne dwelleth with us, as to temptacioun, which peyne highte concupiscence. Whan it is wrongfully disposed or ordeyned in man, it maketh hym coveite, by coveitise of flesch, fleschly synne, by sighte of his eyen as to erthely thynges, and coveitise of hynesse by pride of herte.

NOW, as for to spoken of the firste coveitise, that is concupiscence after the lawe of oure membres, that weren lawefulliche ymakid and by rightful judgement of God; I seye, forasmuch as man is nat obeisaunt to God, that is his Lord, therefore is the flesch to hym disobeisaunt thurgh concupiscence, which yet is cleped norissynge of synne, & occasion of synne. Therefore, al the while that a man hath in hym the peyne of concupiscence, it is impossible but he be tempted somtime, and moeved in his flesch to synne. And this thyng may nat faille as longe as he lyveth; it may wel wexe sieble & faille, by vertu of baptisme & by the grace of God thurgh penitence; but fully ne shal it nevere quenche, that he ne shal somtyme be moeved in hym self, but if he were al refreyded by siknesse, or by malefice of sorcerie, or colded drynkis. for lo, what seith Seint Paul: The flesch coveiteth agayn the spirit, and the spirit agayn the flesch, they been so contrarie &

so stryven, that a man may nat alwey doon as he wolde. The same Seint Paul, after his grete penance in water and in lond; in his grete nyght & by day, in greet peril and in greet peyne, in lond, in famyne, in thirst, in coold, and cloothless, and ones stoned almost to the deeth, yet seyde he: Alas! I, carytyf man, who shal delivere me fro the prison of my carytyf body? And Seint Jerome, whan he longe tyme hadde woned in desert, whereas he hadde no compaignye but of wilde beestes, whereas he ne hadde no mete but herbes, & water to his drynke, ne no bed but the naked erthe, for which his flesch was blak as an Ethiopien for heete, & ny destroyed for coold, yet seyde he: that The brennyng of lecherie boyled in al his body. Wherefore, I woot wel sykerly, that they been deceived that seyn, that they ne be nat tempted in hir body. Witnesse on Seint Jame the Apostel, that seith: that Every wight is tempted in his owene concupiscence; that is to seyn, that everich of us hath matere and occasioun to be tempted of the norissynge of synne that is in his body. And therefore seith Seint John the ewangelist: If that we seyn that we beth withoute synne, we deceyve us selve, and trouthe is nat in us.

NOW shal ye understonde in what manere that synne wexeth or encreeseth in man. The firste thyng is thilke norissynge of synne, of which I spak bi-fore, thilke fleschly concupiscence. And after that comth the subjeccioun of the devel, this is to seyn, the develes bely, with which he bloweth in man the fir of fleschly concupiscence. And after that, a man bi-thynketh hym whether he wol doon, or no, thilke thing to which he is tempted. And thanne, if that a man withstonde & weyve the firste entisynge of his flesch and of the feend, thanne is it no synne; and if it so be that he do nat so, thanne feelet he anon a flambe of delit. And thanne is it good to be war, and kepen hym wel, or elles he wol falle anon into consentynge of synne; and thanne wol he do it, if he may have tyme & place. And of this matere seith Moyses by the devel in this manere: The feend seith, I wole chace and pursue the man by wikkid suggestioun, and I wole hente hym by moeynge or stryngynge of synne. I wol departe my prise or my praye by delibera-coun, and my lust shal been accompliced in delit: I wol drawe my swerd in consentynge: for certes, right as a swerd departeth a thyng in two peces, right so consentynge departeth God fro man: And thanne wol I sleen hym with myn hand in dede of synne; thus seith the feend. For certes, thanne is a man al deed in soule. And thus is synne accompliced by temptacioun, by

delit, and by consentynge; and thanne is the synne cleped actuel.

FORSOTHE, synne is in two maneres; outhere it is venial, or deedly synne. Soothly, whan man loveth any creature moore than Jhesu Crist oure Creatour, thanne is it deedly synne. And venial synne is it, if man love Jhesu Crist lasse than hym oghte. forsothe, the dede of this venial synne is ful perilous; for it amenuseth the love that men sholde han to God moore and moore. And therefore if a man charge hymself with manyes wicheve-nial synnes, certes, but if so be that he somtyme discharge hym of hem by shrifte, they mowe ful lightly amenuse in hym al the love that he hath to Jhesu Crist; and in this wise skippeth venial into deedly synne. for certes, the moore that a man chargeth his soule with venial synnes, the moore is he enclyned to fallen into deedly synne. And therefore, lat us nat be negligent to deschargen us of venial synnes; for the proverbe seith: that Manye smale maken a greet. And herkne this ensample. A greet wawe of the see comth somtyme with so greet a violence that it drencheth the ship. And the same harm dooth somtyme the smale dropses of water, that entren thurgh a litel crevace into the thurrok, and into the botme of the ship, if men be so negligent that they ne discharge hem nat by tyme. And therefore, although ther be a difference bitwixe these two causes of drenchynge, algates the ship is dreynt. Right so fareth it somtyme of deedly synne, and of anoyouse veniale synnes, whan they multiplie in a man so greetly, that thilke worldly thynges that he loveth, thurgh whiche he synneth venially, is as greet in his herte as the love of God, or moore. And therefore, the love of every thyng that is nat biset in God, ne doon principally for Goddes sake, although that a man love it lasse than God, yet is it venial synne; and deedly synne, whan the love of any thyng weyeth in the herte of man as muchel as the love of God, or moore. Deedly synne, as seith Seint Augustyn: Is, whan a man turneth his herte fro God, which that is verrey sovereyn bountee, that may nat chaunge, and yeveth his herte to thyng that may chaunge and flitte. And certes, that is every thyng, save God of hevenc. for sooth is, that if a man yeve his love, the which that he oweth al to God with al his herte, unto a creature, certes, as muche as he yeveth of his love to thilke creature, so muche he bireveth fro God; and therefore dooth he synne. for he that is dettour to God, ne yeldeth nat to God al his dette, that is to seyn, al the love of his herte.